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# THE UNDER-WORLD OF THE DEAD

OR  
THE ABODE OF DEPARTED SPIRITS

REV. J. J. ROSS



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# The Under - World of the Dead

OR

## The Abode of Departed Spirits

*By*

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#### **NOTE**

"The Under-World of the Dead" was read as a paper before the Toronto Baptist Ministerial Association, on April 22nd, 1912. A number of the brethren requested that it be published in pamphlet form that it might have a wide circulation. It is the author's sincere desire that its publication may be the means of correcting and refuting many of the current errors upon this important subject.

J. J. R.

# THE UNDER-WORLD OF THE DEAD

By REV. J. J. ROSS

## TARTARUS

**I**T IS to be regretted that in the Authorized Version of our Old and New Testaments the term "Hell" is used as the rendering of three distinct words with different meanings, ideas and applications. These three words must be distinguished and given their proper place and relation. The first of these words is "Tartarus," and is used only once, and that is in 2 Peter 2:4. The passage, reads: "For if God spared not the angels that sinned but cast them down to hell (Tartarus) and delivered them into the claims of darkness to be reserved unto judgment." In the Revised Version the word "hell" is retained. Among the ancient Greeks the name "Tartarus" designated a subterranean region, where the impenitent suffer punishment for their evil deeds. Plato

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used this word when describing the place, scene and state into which the incurably corrupt are hurled, with a view to their endless imprisonment. By Homer it is the name given to the murky abyss lying as deep beneath Hades as the earth is beneath the sun, in which the wrong deeds of sinful immortals are punished. In this one instance the New Testament adopts the heathen term for the under-world and sets forth the punishment of the fallen angels, with their present abode, and the scene and state of penalty into which these offenders are delivered, held in chains of darkness in reserve for eternal judgment.

#### GEHENNA

The second term translated "Hell" is "Gehenna." This word occurs twelve different times in the New Testament, and for the most part in the Gospels by Matthew, Mark and Luke. It is not found in any of the epistles except the letter of James. In the synoptical Gospels it is found eleven different times in a variety of phrases and always on the lips of our Lord. Some of the phrases in which this word is used are, "the danger of Gehenna fire," to "be cast into

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Gehenna," to "destroy . . . in Gehenna," "the child of Gehenna." This word is only used by our Lord in these books to describe the place and state of just retribution reserved for the finally impenitent which will follow upon and continue eternally after the final judgment. It is important, therefore, that we should examine with due care the precise sense, point and application of this term as employed by the Master.

According to George Adam Smith and S. T. D. Salmon, the term "Gehenna," which is Christ's solemn designation of the future eternal under-world the abode of the finally impenitent, represents the Aramaic and Hebrew for "the valley of Hinnom," or more fully, "the valley of the Son of Hinnom" and "the valley of the children of Hinnom." Thus the name originally was taken to mean "the valley of Howling or the valley of bitter lamentation."

From the Hebrew word Gehinnom, which, according to the best authorities means "wailing," and originally described a real place, a valley, the Greek term Gehenna is derived, and is always translated by our English word hell. The place so named in the



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Hebrew Scriptures was a deep gorge in the vicinity of Jerusalem, on the south side, forming the continuation of the valley of Gihon and where the Tyropean and Kedron valleys meet, separating the Hill Zion from the Hill of the Evil Council. This gorge is now known as the Wady-er Rebabi and is frequently mentioned in the Old Testament. From the days of Joshua, three stages especially mark this memorable place. Originally Josephus says that it was the most beautiful spot on earth, a veritable paradise. Solomon spent much money and time in beautifying this valley with groves, parks, drives, walks, fountains, in which sweet music was heard and which rose to the royal palace on Mount Zion just above. During this period this valley was called "Tophet," a name used for it ten times in the Old Testament, which means Tabret Grove.

But Israel sinned in the days of their first glory in the land. Solomon, their representative head, fell away, and did much evil in the sight of the Lord; he built high places, planted groves and sacrificed to the idols of the surrounding nations whence he selected



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his strange wives. The kings of Israel after him followed his example until the days of Josiah. They even went further and caused their children to pass through the fire unto Molech, which the Lord had commanded them not to do. This is the sad picture this valley presents in its second stage, in which period it answers in a measure to its name, Hinnom, *Wailing*.

In the place where songs and sweet music were heard, now, on account of their sins and departure from God and His laws, the groans and bitter wailings of their children were heard.

The third stage in the history of this valley is marked when we reach the days of Josiah, that good king, who began early to reign and who, too, sought the Lord when young. This good king, you will recall, immediately sought to cleanse the land, the city and this valley in particular from those evils that had entered and were holding sway over the people since the days of Solomon. He defiled Tophet, which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech (2 Kings 23 : 10). He cut down the

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groves and burned them, he utterly destroyed the gardens, he ground the idols into powder, and further, in those places where those evils had been allowed, encouraged and practised, he caused that the very bones of the dead should be strewn, and Tophet, the Tabret grove, in the valley of Hinnom, from that time became the defiled, the cursed place, where the refuse of the city was cast and burned, and where the carcases of animals and even the dead bodies of criminals who had lived a life so vile as to be judged unworthy of respectable burial, were also placed. The worm preyed upon their putrid flesh and the fire burned continually day and night, being never quenched. From this time, Tophet, the gorge of the children of Hinnom, outside of the Holy City, became the appalling figure of hell, the place of everlasting punishment of the wicked.

It is now that we get the full import of the name Hinnom, wailing. "And shall cast them into the furnace of fire, there shall be wailing (Hinnom) and gnashing of teeth." Thus the terrible associations of this valley, the recollection of the awful horrors

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perpetrated in it, and the utter defilement inflicted upon it, the fires said to have been kept burning in it in order to consume the corrupt objects that were thrown into it, made it the natural and unmistakable symbol of dire evil, torment, wasting penalty and absolute, eternal ruin.

Now, what does this terrible figure in the language of our Lord plainly teach upon the subject of the *final* doom of the impenitent? There are several things made clear in the term used. Gehenna was outside the city, and so the final abode of torment will be outside the New Jerusalem, which cometh down from God out of Heaven (Rev. 21 : 8, 27). Gehenna was the place for refuse and for all that was defiling and loathsome. The future Gehenna will be exactly the same, for "there shall in no wise enter into it (the New Jerusalem) anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."

As a type, in fact as the old narrow gorge, Gehenna has served its purpose and passed away; but

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the Gehenna of fire, yet future, when the righteous wrath of the thrice holy God shall burn continually and when the worm of a living conscience will gnaw eternally, will be the judgment upon all the wicked and those who refuse Christ and His redemption.

The eternity of the Gehenna punishment is the one thing that our Lord emphasizes in all these passages. He allows absolutely no place for annihilation or restoration. The bodies as well as the souls of the wicked are to be cast into the Gehenna flame and that forever. He speaks of the future Gehenna as "eternal fire," "unquenchable fire," "the place where their worm dieth not," and "their fire is not quenched," "the prison" from which there is no escape," "eternal punishment" as contrasted with eternal life, exclusion from the kingdom, banishment from Christ, "weeping and gnashing of teeth," "outer darkness," etc. (Matt. 18 : 8, 9; Mark 9 : 43-49; Matt. 5 : 25, 26; Luke 12 : 58, 59; Matt. 25 : 30).

Elsewhere the final destiny of the unrighteous is described as the "mist of darkness forever," 2 Peter

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2 : 17; "the blackness of darkness forever," Jude 13; "the furnace of fire," "perdition," Heb. 10 : 27, 39; "burning with fire," being "without," the "second death," being "cast into the lake of fire," the "lake that burneth with brimstone and fire" (Rev. 22 : 23; 18 : 8, 9; 20 : 6; 10 : 19, 20, 21; 8 : 22, 15); "the wrath to come," "wrath and indignation," "tribulation and anguish," "death," "punishment," "destruction," "eternal destruction from the face of the Lord" (2 Thess. 1 : 9; Phil. 3 : 19; Rom. 2 : 5, 8; 6 : 21). Beyond these terms and phrases which are so solemn and suggestive, the teaching of Jesus and His apostles do not carry us, and surely it is enough!

There is not the slightest suggestion in any of these terms, phrases or passages of annihilation or restoration. The punishment for the rejection of Christ, the Gehenna of fire, the final doom of the wicked will be endless in its duration and commensurate with the infinite holiness of an infinite law. Into this final Hell no one has ever yet entered. It is "prepared" for the devil and his angels; but none of them are there now. The first persons who will go into this place

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and state of torment are the beast and false prophet, whoever they are, and after 1,000 years the implication is, that they are still alive and enduring the torments of the damned (Rev. 19 : 20; 20 : 10). This does not look much like annihilation, extinction of being, or restoration. The next to go into it is Satan himself and then follows the casting in of all the wicked whose names were not written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

### SHEOL OR HADES

We come now to examine the third word rendered "Hell" in the Bible. That word is "Sheol" in the Old Testament, and "Hades" in the New Testament, the former being the Hebrew and the latter the Greek for the same place and condition. In the Old Testament *Sheol* is translated thirty-one times *grave*, thirty-one times *hell*, and three times *the pit*. With the exception of one doubted passage (1 Cor. 15 : 55) the word *Hades* is employed in the New Testament ten different times and is rendered by the English term *hell* in each case (Matt. 11 : 23; 16 : 18; Luke 16 : 35; 10 : 15; Acts 2 : 27, 31; Rev. 1 : 18; 6 : 8;

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20 : 13, 14). In the Book of the Revelation (6 : 8) Hades, as in many of the other passages where the term is used, is in league with Death, who rides the pale horse, and accompanies the latter to secure his booty of victims.

Evidently in the mind of the Seer, Hades in this particular case was not so much a state or condition or even a place, but a mighty, malignant power, personified in the act of violent destruction, especially in famine, pestilence and war, inflicting deadly wounds on large masses rather than on individuals. In ancient mythology Hades is always a person. He was believed to be the god of wealth and was worshipped as such. He was represented as blind and bestowing his gifts on the good and bad without distinction. The caves of Spain, famous for their deposits of precious metals, were assigned as his abode. On the threefold division of the universe he obtained absolute power over the under-world, the realm of darkness and ghostly shades, where he sits enthroned as the king over the spirits of the dead. Hades is eternally fixed in his disposition, not being moved by prayers, sacrifices nor flatteries.



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He is borne on a car, down by four black steeds, which he guides with golden reins. His helmet makes him invisible, and hence according to some scholars we have the meaning of his name. In Homer, according to Thayer, Hades generally means a person and not primarily a state, a place or condition. Such, I think, is the idea of Hades as presented in this one passage in the Book of Revelation.

But it is not about Hades as a person that I desire to speak in particular. There are about seventy passages in which "Sheol" and "Hades" are used only to describe the nether world, the region, the realm, the intermediate rendezvous of disembodied spirits. By common consent among scholars, the Greek word Hades is the exact equivalent of the Hebrew "Sheol." To all intents and purposes, therefore, "Sheol" and "Hades" denote the same thing. But these terms are never used to denote the final Hell of Gehenna fire. Unlike the Hell of eternal punishment, the body is never said to go into it. Neither are these words ever used to designate the mere receptacle of the body after death, *the grave, and should never have*

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*been rendered by that term.* A careful examination of the passages where these words are employed will assure us that they mean the same thing, the nether invisible world, which is distinct from the hell of final judgment or the heaven of eternal glory.

Now what do these many passages teach upon the subject of the intermediate under-world, of the dead? I claim that there are several things put absolutely beyond dispute. With a consciousness of recapitulating a little more than what is due, let us briefly note these things.

We note first that these words and passages teach that the under-world of the dead is not primarily a state or condition, but a definite *place*. Hebrew and Greek scholars are agreed that the true and only meaning of these words thus used is "the place of departed spirits," the receptacle of the souls which have left the body. In Bennett's *Theology of the Early Christian Church*, pp. 323, 324, we read, "Translating the word *Hades* according to its etymology and its common use among the Greeks, *it is rendered an invisible place.*" In Beveridge, on the Thirty-nine

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Articles, pp. 115, 116, he says: "I cannot give a better periphrasis of the word *Hades* than by translating it, *that invisible place where the souls that leave their bodies live*, whether it be a place of bliss or torment. In this sense," he affirms, "it is taken and used in Scripture, the Apocrypha, Fathers, yea, and in the heathenish authors, too." A. B. Bruce, in *The Parabolic Teaching of Christ*, pp. 391, defines Hades as "the common receptacle of the dead." According to Salmond the word means "*the covered, unseen, hidden place*, the abode of the departed, the nether world, into which men pass at the event of death." Not only in the meaning of these words, but also by every description of it in the Bible, we conclude that it is a place. Souls are spoken of as descending into it, remaining in it for a time and coming up out of it again.

At His death the Lord Himself went down into it, remained there exactly seventy-two hours, according to prophecy, and then came forth again in resurrection power, holding aloft the keys of Hades, and leading captive unto Himself a multitude of captives (Acts

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2:27; Rev. 2:18; Eph. 4:8, 9.) Into this place all departed spirits, good and bad, went up to the time of the resurrection of Christ.

Not only is Sheol or Hades a definite place, but a definite place which is manifestly distinct from the grave, the common receptacle of the body after death. A few considerations will make this plain. The word employed to designate the grave (Queber) in the Old Testament is used sixty-four times. It is spoken of in the plural, the body is represented as being placed in it by the hands of man, it is always located on the earth, human beings are represented as digging, building or making it, and man is prohibited from touching it lest he be rendered ceremonially unclean. The word for the under-world of the dead in the Old Testament and the term employed to describe the burial place for the dead body are never used interchangeably and the reason is that they set forth two different and widely contrasted things.

The same fact is true in the New Testament, where there are at least two words (Mnemion and Taphos) which describe the burial place. These words are

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translated grave, tomb and sepulcher and never used interchangeably with Hades, the word used to set forth the place where those spirits live who have left their bodies. In the New Testament, as in the Old, the words for grave or tomb are used in the plural, the place described is always represented as located on the earth, the dead body is mentioned as being placed in it by the hands of man. Man is represented as digging, making or building it and he is prohibited from touching it lest he be rendered ceremonially unclean.

Now all this is not true in reference to Sheol or Hades. It is never spoken of in the plural, man's body is never spoken of as going there, it is never once described as located on the earth, it is never once spoken of as being owned by one or more persons. Man never put anyone into it. Man never builds, digs or makes Sheol or Hades and neither is he prohibited from touching it. Why? The reason is plain. Though Jacob believed that the body of his beloved Joseph was torn to pieces and eaten by the wild beasts, yet he had the full confidence that he himself, on the

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event of death would descend unto that self-same son into Sheol (Gen. 37: 35, R. V., Margin). To the mind and faith of the old patriarch the grave was the place for the body and Sheol was the place for the disembodied spirit. The body of Dives was "buried" in the tomb and that doubtless with great pomp, but "he," the unclothed man, opened his eyes in Hades, being in bitter anguish. The limp body of Jesus was tenderly embalmed and laid away in that new sepulcher loaned for it, but He, the three days unincarnate Son of God, descended into Hades, the abode of the departed dead (Acts 2: 26, 27). Thus we see that Hades is one place and the grave is another. Those who claim that Hades and the grave are the same place, namely, the tomb, are ignorant of the Biblical facts, blinded by prejudice or knowingly the deceivers of the people.

But not only is Sheol or Hades a place and a place distinct from the grave, it is also a place of definite location. Every place must have a location. To try to locate the abode of the departed spirits; and especially now the abode of the unsaved departed spirits is sneered at by some students and teachers of the Bible.

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And yet it seems to me there is nothing about this subject, nor in fact any other subject that is more plainly taught in the Word of God. There are many passages that refer to this phase of our subject, but we will only call attention to three of them. In the Epistle to the Philippians (chap. 2:9, 10) the apostle divides all human beings into three classes. Those in heaven, those on earth and those *under the earth*, or in "the under-world." Is "under the earth," or the under-world, and Hades not the same place? The Pharisees asked a sign of Jesus. He answered, "There shall no sign be given but the sign of the prophet Jonas." What was the sign of the prophet Jonas? "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights *in the heart of the earth*" (Matt. 12: 38-40). In the Epistle to the Ephesians (chap. 4: 8-10) we are informed that before Christ ascended up on high "*He descended first into the lower parts of the earth.*" The phrases "under the earth," the "heart of the earth," and the "lower parts of the earth," all refer to the same place. As to His body,

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our Lord was not, during those three days, in that place. His body was in the grave, or merely in connection with the earth. When we compare the second chapter of the Acts (vs. 25, 32) we learn, I think, that Sheol and Hades and the "heart of the earth" are the one and the same region, the abode of the departed dead.

Furthermore, we learn, I think, from these terms and passages that the intermediate place of the spirits who have left their bodies was, up to the time of Christ's resurrection, composed of two apartments, the abodes respectively of the saved and lost. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua and many of the Old Testament saints are described, on the event of their death, as descending into Sheol. The part of the under-world into which they went is called "Paradise" and "Abraham's bosom," both expressions being Talmudic.

The blessed dead were with Abraham and were "comforted" (Luke 16:25). The believing malefactor was to be that very day with Christ in "paradise." Both the rich man and Lazarus went into Hades when



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they died, for the plain statement is "*in Hades* he lifted up his eyes and seeth Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom." Abraham, Lazarus and Dives were there all in the same place, the only difference between them being, that Abraham and Lazarus were separated from Dives by a fixed, impassible gulf, and that Lazarus was comforted and Dives tormented. The Old Testament saints, the believing ones who died prior to the first Easter morning; Lazarus, the penitent thief and Christ Himself, all went into Paradise; that is, into the most favorable part of Hades. They were neither in heaven proper, nor in hell proper; but simply and only in *Hades*. In this Hades all the departed spirits went, the good with the good and the bad with the bad. There was comfort for the saved and torment for the wicked. They of one part could not pass over to those into the other part; but still they could see and converse with each other and none of them were in their final happiness or misery.

In the resurrection of Christ, however, a great change was wrought in Hades itself and in the whole condition of the saved dead from that time forward,

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Christ's descent into Hades after death was a part and a great part of His redemptive work, and the beginning of His exaltation as the glorious Redeemer. He did not descend into Hades as the subject or prisoner of death, like all those who had died before Him, but as the Conqueror of death, heralding His victory to the spirits therein detained (1 Peter 3:18). But on that first Easter morning He came up out of Hades again, actually bringing with Him all the saved souls, even resurrecting many of them (Matt. 27:52, 53). It is with special reference to this that He announced Himself to John as having the keys of death and Hades (Rev. 1:18). When Christ made His triumphant ascent out of Hades He "led captive a multitude of captives," at the same time distributing gifts unto men as tokens of His glorious achievement, for the redemption of the race (Eph. 4:8, 9). The day that Christ came up out of the under-world, He utterly abolished it for all the believers of the succeeding ages. Since that day no saved departed spirit has gone into it. Of His Church, He said, "the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it," meaning doubtless

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that those gates should never again close upon even one member of His mystical Body. In Christ's glorious ascent from the nether world, He brought "Paradise" and all those who inhabited it, with Him and now, the "garden," the place of bliss, the area laid out for pleasure, is no longer in Hades, but above, in the heavens, in the immediate presence of God, where Christ is seated at the right hand of the Eternal Majesty, where its inmates enjoy a far more blessed portion than was ever enjoyed in Sheol.

If Paradise is in the immediate presence of God, in the heaven above, and Sheol, the abode of the unsaved dead, is somewhere in "the heart of the earth," what about Hades at the present? So far as the unsaved dead are concerned no change of their place or state is revealed in Scripture. At the final judgment, Hades will give up the unsaved dead, they will be judged and will then pass into the Gehenna fire (Rev. 22: 13, 14), where the smoke of their torment will ascend up from the ages unto the ages. But what is the state or condition of those in Hades now? Has Revelation anything to say to us upon this phase

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of this subject? It has. Are the disembodied spirits there active and conscious? We will let the Scriptures answer. Of the unsaved dead the Scriptures declare that they are in prison (1 Peter 3:19); that is, under restraint and guard, and in that prison they are reserved unto the day of judgment to be punished (2 Peter 2:9). There is no need of putting unconscious spirits under guard. Hovey says, "Restraint implies power of action and suffering implies consciousness."

They are also said to be in torment (Luke 16:23). Dives is a representative of all those who are in Hades at the present. He is in great pain while probation lasts for his brethren on earth. He thinks, remembers, sees, hears, speaks, feels, protests, and prays for mercy, which is denied him. Fire is the source of his suffering, but not of annihilation. Two thousand years B. C. the fire consumed the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, the cities of the plain, as far as their bodies were concerned, so that they were not left, root nor branch. But Jude declares (6, 7) that since that time, and in the present, the citizens of those towns, as

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far as their spirits were concerned, are suffering the pains of eternal fire. The message of Revelation, then, is that the souls in Hades are in torment, "suffering," "in prison," under restraint, and that fire, eternal fire is the instrument of their torture.

But some will ask: "What is this fire?" I do not know, and thank God, through Jesus Christ, I never will know. Some tell us that the Hadean fire is a symbol. So be it. Let us remember that the symbol is never greater than the reality. The seed thrown broadcast in the earth is not greater than the word of the kingdom, the vehicle of the divine life to the human soul. The four different kinds of soil are not greater than the four different kinds of human hearts, set forth by them. The tares among the wheat, and bad fish in the dragnet are not greater than the counterfeit Christians represented by them. The lion of the jungle is not greater than the Lion of the tribe of Judah. The sign, the symbol, is always less than the thing signified. The figurative language of Holy Writ is always a representation, on a greatly reduced scale, of a fact, a reality, that cannot be described by words.

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The fire of Hades, as a symbol, is not therefore greater than the terrible reality set forth by it.

What is this reality? Fire in the Bible, as a figure, is essentially a symbol of Divine holiness. As such it expresses God, in His essential and transcendent holiness, in three ways: (1) In purification, 1 Cor. 3: 12-14; Matt. 3: 2, 3; (2) in the manifestation of Himself in that which He approves, Ex. 3: 2; 1 Peter 1: 7; (3) and in judgment upon that which His holiness utterly condemns, Mark 9: 43-48; Rev. 20: 15.

Remembering this, What does the fire of Hades look like? There is nothing in it about purification or the Divine sanction. It is God, the just God, expressing Himself in righteous wrath upon sin, even upon that which His infinite holiness utterly condemns.

In every human breast, pagan, Jew, infidel or Christian, developed to a greater or less degree there is resident this ethical principle of Divine nature, which we call conscience. "The wicked," said Calvin, "have the seeds of hell in their own hearts." Milton makes even Satan say, "Which way I fly is hell; myself am hell." Byron declares, "There is no power in holy

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man, nor charm in prayer, nor purifying form of penitence, nor outward look, nor fast, nor agony, nor greater than all these, (the innate torture of deep despair would make hell of heaven), can exorcise from out the unbounded spirit the quick sense of its own sins." Another said, "I know of the future judgment, how dreadful so it be, that to sit alone with my conscience will be judgment enough for me." Would to God that the Hadean fire were only the reality and not the symbol!

### TWO ERRORS REFUTED

I said that the word Gehenna and the passages that contain it allow absolutely no ground for a second chance, future hope, annihilation or final restoration. Now we find that the terms and passages which describe the intermediate under-world of the lost dead help us to properly estimate and refute two other great doctrinal errors. They refute that doctrinal error which claims that souls sleep between death and the judgment. This view is most destructive to human beings, has absolutely no support in Scripture and is based upon the false assumption that the possession of a physical body is necessary to activity and consciousness. The unfallen angels are probably pure spirit beings. Are they not active and conscious?

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(Heb. 1:14.) God is pure spirit, and is He not active and conscious? Where death is spoken of as "sleep" in Scripture (Dan. 12:2; Matt. 9:24; John 11:11; 1 Cor. 11:30; 15:51; 1 Thess. 4:14; 5:10), it refers only to the body and never to the soul.

This study of Hades contradicts also that error which claims that the torment, the suffering in the place of departed spirits is purgatorial. According to that doctrine "all who die at peace with the Church (the Roman Catholic Church) but are not perfect, pass into purgatory." Here, it is claimed, they make satisfaction for their sins committed after baptism, by enduring pain for a longer or shorter period, according to the greatness of their sinnerhood. The Church on earth, however, has power, by prayers and the sacrifice of the mass, to lessen and shorten these punishments or to remit them altogether. But we have noticed that no saved disembodied spirit goes into Hades now. The saved are completely free from the sufferings of the under-world. For them to leave the body is for them immediately to pass into Paradise and to be with the Lord (1 Cor. 5:1-4; Phil. 1:21-23).



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The Church on earth has no power to forgive sins, either in this world or in the next; God alone can forgive sin, and does, and will forgive when the sinner repents toward Him and believes on His Son as the only Saviour of men, and it is the Church's place to clearly and lovingly declare this sublime message. This view, moreover, denies the completeness of the atonement made in Christ and that justification before God is on the ground of faith alone. These passages make it unmistakably clear that all who pass into Hades at death, like all who pass into Paradise at death, have their place and destiny fixed for all eternity. None who enter the Hadean fire will escape the eternal Gehenna flame.

#### CONCLUSION

In conclusion. In the announcement that the risen Lord made to John, He claimed unconditional and unlimited authority over the entrance to the realm of the dead by saying "I have the keys of death and of *Hades*." The Pope is not the holder of those keys and neither is any other human being or body of human beings. Jesus had those keys then, He holds them still, and from His resurrection to this present

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moment they have been wielded by Him. With those keys, He has the power to shut that none can open and open that none can shut. He gives persons to *death* and *Hades* and retains them there as He will, and He will bring them forth again at His good pleasure, as He did the little maid, the young man and Lazarus, Mary's brother. There is no part of Hades so deep or difficult to open, but He can open it, and thrust His enemies in, and bolt it that they may never come out until the great white throne is set. He will apply those keys again and every soul will come forth into resurrection life to pass into eternal judgment with body and spirit united. But at the present time, and now for two thousand years, and praise God for it, He locks the gates of Hades against His friends that they might not enter there but pass into Paradise. Though once dead and an inmate of Hades, He is alive now for all the ages of the ages.

This risen life communicated to the soul by the Holy Spirit saves from the under-world of sadness and gloom and secures the title to eternal happiness and glory. Simple reliance upon Christ as the one

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who satisfied the broken law for us and paid the full penalty of our sins is the one and only condition for the possession of this life.

Let us, then, trust Him without reserve, love Him completely, obey Him implicitly, sacrifice for Him willingly, and preach Him compassionately.

"In our hearts enthrone Him;  
There let Him subdue,  
All that is not holy,  
All that is not true;  
Crown Him as our Captain,  
In temptation's hour,  
Let His will enfold us,  
In its light and power."

# The Sign of His Coming

OR

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About the Self-Styled "Pastor"  
Charles T. Russell

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